

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **GOOD THINGS COME TO THOSE WHO WAIT--AND PREPARE Newark Emergency Services for Families Awarded Million Dollar HUD "Innovative Project" Grant**

Good things come to those who wait, but they also come to those who prepare. Just ask Newark Emergency Services for Families (NESF), a small, community social service agency that provides emergency assistance with food, clothing, shelter, public utilities and other basic necessities to over 25,000 Greater Newark area residents annually. In a partnership with the Salvation Army, the 16-year-old agency has been awarded a grant worth nearly \$1 million dollars by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to expand their client services and better assist the homeless.

The agency had been waiting for an opportunity that would give them resources to see many of their dreams of expanding become a reality. On Friday, Feb. 4, 1994 at 4:45 p.m., that opportunity presented itself.

"I was just about to leave for the day when our secretary stopped me," remembers Joseph Tuckman," NESF's Director of Development. "She told me there was a telephone call from Senator Bradley's office--and right away I got nervous.

Tuckman says when the Senator's aide shared the news with him that NESF had been chosen for the grant, he ran through the agency's 5th Floor office at 303 Washington Street

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shouting the good news.

Tuckman's fellow co-workers as well as clients seeking help were perplexed until he explained the significance of the grant.

According to Tuckman, the agency has waited patiently over the years for funding that would allow them to serve client needs and the overall homeless population more effectively. With so many agencies seeking dollars from the funding pie, NESF continued working with the resources they had until they were able to receive their piece. Thanks to the HUD grant, they received their slice--and some!

The grant, entitled "Renaissance of the Spirit" totals \$997,380, ranked ninth in the nation of the 48 grants awarded by HUD and was the only recipient in New Jersey. It fits in nicely with "Renaissance Newark"--the campaign to rebuild New Jersey's largest urban community and the driving force behind the NJ Performing Arts Center, a \$150 million project scheduled to open in the fall of 1996. The grant will give Newark Emergency Services for Families resources to provide outreach, assessment/services and homeless prevention to over 25,000 needy individuals throughout Newark, Irvington, and East Orange.

Specifically, the grant allows the agency to: 1) work with the Salvation Army to provide specialized services through a mobile canteen containing meals, blankets, clothing, etc. when

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other agencies offering these services have closed for the day; 2) expand office hours beyond normal business hours until 8 p.m.; 3) use its Central Intake Unit and 24-hour hot line to become the nucleus for those in need by providing more efficient and preventive services to clients, and eliminate the necessity for them to travel to several agencies for help as well as duplication of services among agencies; 4) provide services that are culturally sensitive to the needs of the African-American homeless population; 5) purchase a van that would allow workers to travel to spots frequented by the "invisible homeless"--such as those in Newark Penn Station, Newark International Airport and abandoned buildings; and 6) begin renovating a 24,000 square foot facility donated to the agency.

Bonnie Perry, Executive Director of NESF, says the grant is like a dream come true.

"For years, our staff, board members and various supporters have discussed and planned several ways to expand our services to better meet the needs of the community but funding was always a problem," she said. "With this grant from HUD, we can take the first step to putting our vision in place."

She noted, however, that the grant is only the first step of many that will be needed to get the new programs underway and continue existing progress. As always, operating dollars are still a problem.

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Another accomplishment is set to take place on Friday, March 11th as they work with the Carter G. Woodson Foundation who will present Sweet Honey In The Rock at Newark Symphony Hall at 8:00 p.m. The group, whose lyrics focus on righteousness and justice, share a kindred spirit with NESF because the agency carries out the group's message by helping the needy. At the concert, NESF will be collecting non-perishable items and cash donations from concert goers.

"Their songs bring attention to the needs of the community, and our agency aims to provide services to meet these needs," said Perry. "Although they're a singing group and we're a social service agency, the philosophies are similar--helping those in need."

Finally, the agency known for preventing emergencies from becoming tragedies will continue its fast pace tone with their 10th Annual Fund-raising Auction on April 20th at The Newark Club. The auction offers a variety of auction items including trips to locations near and far, dinner passes to the finest restaurants, items, services and goods. To make contributions to the auction, purchase an advertisement in the auction's ad journal and/or purchase tickets, call NESF at (201) 643-5727.

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